Last week, I spewed out a post on potential Liberal leadership candidates less than 24 hours after Justin Trudeau resigned.

Like most material published on the Liberal leadership race in its extreme infancy, that post was full of conjecture and rank speculation; indeed, anything published about the race at that point was bound to be unmoored from any concrete events as it was too early for significant events to have transpired.

This week's post, while still containing a healthy dose of speculation and conjecture, will partially serve to review the multitude of predictions I made last week. Some predictions were inaccurate; others were rendered moot by potential candidates declining to run. Other predictions, however, ended up being quite prescient in retrospect.

The rest of the post will be a grab bag of various events related to the leadership race that have occurred over the past week, independent of any previous predictions.

Hopefully, you'll gain a clearer sense of the race as it stands, and provide a useful forecast of how the race will transpire going forward.

Thanks for reading! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work.

Rules of the Game

The Liberals have set up a $350 000 entrance fee that candidates are required to pay in order to enter the race, which is a significant jump from the $75 00 needed in 2013.

This is more than the entrance fee for the 2022 CPC leadership ($300 000) and has likely been put in place to weed out irrelevant also-rans, therefore narrowing down the race to just the top-tier contenders (or potentially contender, more on that in a bit).

The voting day, March 9th, has also been announced. This creates an incredibly short timeline in which a leadership election can be held, which also will help the *crème de la crème* candidates.

The initial rules for registering as a party member in order to vote apparently made the process free and didn't bar non-citizens or children from signing up, leading some to making their dearly departed pets members of the LPC.

These fraudulent memberships have now been cracked down on, yet memberships are still free and non-citizens can still vote (despite the protestations of some Liberal MPs).

These lax rules regarding just who can vote in this race provide a wonderful opportunity for foreign influence of all kinds, which could potentially favour certain candidates over others.

All the Declined Candidates

So far, most of the major developments concerning the Liberal leadership race have revolved around who *isn't* running.

As of January 12, Sean Fraser[1], Anita Anand, Brian Gallant, Mélanie Joly (thank god), Dominic LeBlanc, Steve MacKinnon, and Marc Miller have all declined to run.

Fraser, Miller, Gallant, and MacKinnon didn't even make my list of potential candidates last week. Anand, Joly, and LeBlanc all came from the middle tier, leaving François-Philippe Champagne as the only candidate left in that category.

These exits have changed the race from one of numerous mid-tier contenders into a one of two possibilities: one is a bifurcated contest split between irrelevant also-rans and the Carney/Freeland duo; the other features that same bifurcation, except in this case, the dichotomy is between the also-rans and the former Governor of the Bank of England.

Christy Clark's Implosion

Out of all that I wrote on January 8th, my section on Christy Clark was, by far, the most prescient.

In particular, these specific passages ended up being of great relevance:

> The last time I heard from Christy Clark, she was endorsing Jean Charest to head to federal Conservative Party.
>
> And now, just two years later, she's considering a run for the leadership of the federal….Liberal Party???

On Friday, Christy Clark went on CBC Radio's Saturday morning show/podcast *The House,* which should have been a softball interview for her considering the CBC is usually sympathetic to Liberal politicians.

She was then asked a softball question related to why she joined the Conservatives in 2022 to vote for Jean Charest.

And she then proceeded to handle this question in the absolute worst way possible.

Clark claimed, despite all evidence, that she never bought a CPC membership, never received her ballot from the party, and never voted in the race that coronated Pierre Poilievre.

Since these claims were so specific in nature, the CBC was easily able to verify that all three of them were false.

This, unsurprisingly, generated a ton of negative press coverage for Clark, which is the last thing a potential candidate who hasn't been in the political arena for over seven years needs.

Right from the beginning, I was skeptical that there was any feasible avenue of success for Christy Clark in this race:

> Clark was a relatively centrist premier of BC. Her father was a delegate for noted Blue Liberal John Turner. Yet the centrist position in this leadership race will probably be filled by the likes of LeBlanc and Champagne, with Carney's economic credentials likely making him appealing to these sorts of voters as well.

> This leaves little room for Clark, who also lacks the long-standing connections to the federal Liberal Party and French fluency of LeBlanc and Champagne.
>
> Not to mention that the centrist wing of the Liberals has drastically shrunk over the last decade.

I also called her a delusional opportunist, and suggested that she would finish on first ballot with around 3% of the vote:

> Indeed, one is left to wonder why exactly Clark is even considering a run?
>
> One must look to the Artist Formerly Known as Twitter for clues.
>
> On X yesterday, Clark said that now is the "biggest opportunity in over a decade that we've had to grow our Party and welcome new Liberals".
>
> So maybe she's delusional? Or an opportunist? or both?

> When Christy Clark's ex-husband Mark Marissen ran for mayor of Vancouver in 2022, he won a measly 3.47% of the vote. I expect that Christy Clark will finish this race with a percentage of the vote roughly approximating that of her ex.

Considering Friday's events, I can confidently say that I stand by everything I previously wrote about Christy Clark.

Carney's Coronation?

With all of the former potential candidates announcing in rapid succession this week that they are declining to run, many have started speculating that the Liberal higher-ups are designing this race to be a coronation for their golden boy Mark Carney.

This is further buoyed by Carney apparently having amassed a not-insignificant base of support within the Liberal caucus.

But, you ask, what about Chrystia Freeland! Isn't she, as I wrote last week, supposed to be the heir to Trudeau?

You see, Freeland's abrupt resignation in December and swipe at Trudeau in her resignation letter has left a sour taste in the mouths of many senior Liberals.

Her close involvement with Justin Trudeau since the very beginning of his leadership also means that she carries the baggage of every damaging and politically toxic decision he has made.

Mark Carney, on the other hand, has never been in Cabinet or even the House of Commons (he would hate to have to sit as a backbencher with those plebians, after all). This means it is much easier for him to distance himself from the current administration, although his short-lived role as Trudeau's economic advisor complicates this strategy.

Although recent news still has Freeland "poised" to enter the race, I wouldn't be surprised if she declines to run within the next several days. We shall see.

Chandra Arya: The comic relief

At the outset, I thought this leadership race would be a boring contest between a long lineup of beige Liberal cabinet ministers.

However, one candidate appears (somewhat by accident) to be bucking that initial prediction of mine.

Chandra Arya has been a backbench MP from the Ottawa-area riding of Nepean since 2015, and has languished in near-total obscurity until now.

He doesn't speak French, and barely speaks English (despite his House of Commons profile claiming that he speaks both).

To date, his most significant moment in the public eye has been him opposing the creating of a foreign influence registry.

He has also called for Hindus to reclaim the term Swastika.

His platform chastises the government he has been apart of for the past nine years for creating terrible economic conditions, yet he has voted against all the no-confidence motions that came before the House of Commons in the fall session.

And as a Liberal, he opposes DEI, supports abolishing the monarchy, and wants Canada to recognize a Palestinian state.

From the picture I have painted thus far, it is painfully evident that Chandra Arya is both a vehicle for sectarian diaspora politics and a man with bizarre political instincts.

I absolutely love him.

I'll be voting for him on March 9th[2]. Unfortunately, my dog who died ten years ago won't be able to. Au revoir!

1
I don't why anyone actually expected Sean Fraser to run for Liberal leadership since he had already declared his intention to not run in the next election and left cabinet. Either way, he declined to enter the race.

2
Officially, anyone who takes out a Liberal membership is supposed to "support the purposes of the party", which I obviously don't. However, such a phrase is incredibly nebulous and open to interpretation - therefore, I could be said to

“support the purposes of the party” if I define the purposes of the party as getting crushed in the next election.